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U. S. ESTABLISHES GAME REFUGE
IN GEORGE WASHINGTON FOREST

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By proclamation of the President, a 30,000-acre Federal Game Refuge is to be established in the George Washington National Forest, Virginia, the Forest Service announced today. The area, to be known as the Big Levels Game Refuge, is located in Augusta County, in the northern end of the Natural Bridge division of the George Washington Forest.

Establishment of the refuge follows numerous requests from State officials and citizens of neighboring communities. In 1930 an area of more than 3,000 acres within the present refuge was set aside as a State game refuge, at the request of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. Later the Waynesboro Game and Fish Protective Association requested that the State Refuge be enlarged and taken over by the Federal Government for the practice of managed game control.

In November, 1934, at a meeting of the State Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, a special committee was appointed to study the matter and to determine local opinion. After a report by this committee favoring the creation of a Federal Wildlife Management Area, the Commission approved the Committee's report and requested the Forest Service to proceed with the establishment of the refuge.

The proposed Big Levels Wildlife Area was inspected by representatives of the Forest Service and the Biological Survey and, based on their recommendations, the President's proclamation was issued July 6. The proclamation states that no

further hunting or fishing will be allowed on the area ". . . except under such general rules and regulations as may be prescribed from time to time by the Secretary of Agriculture."

"This proclamation," says Howard Hopkins, Assistant Regional Forester for the Eastern National Forest Region, "establishes an area on which the Forest Service plans to handle the wildlife resources under sustained yield management." Under such management the game and wildlife will be developed and maintained as a permanent resource. Controlled hunting may later be permitted under regulations that will prevent the taking of game in excess of the annual increase, or the depletion of the "capital stock" in wildlife resources.

The Biological Survey will cooperate with the Forest Service in making a wildlife management survey of the Big Levels area this summer. It is planned to start a field crew soon after August 1. Field work, according to present plans, will be completed this summer and fall, and a detailed management plan next winter.

In the meantime, the national forest land within the Big Levels Federal Refuge area will be handled as a Federal game preserve. As soon as the management plan is completed and approved, special rules and regulations for the handling of fish and game resources on this area will be issued by the Secretary of Agriculture.